

# **Students As Conductors!**

This month I have been thinking about the idea of children as conductors. Dictionary.com defines a "conductor" as "a person who directs an orchestra or chorus, communicating to the performers by motions of a baton or the hands, his or her interpretation of the music". How often do we encourage kids to do this? When do our students have the chance to lead their music class in a song or piece....especially if they have written it themselves?

The music classroom is a perfect place for children to explore their capabilities and gain confidence. Where else can kids try things out and not be wrong? It is true that we teach our students to be thoughtful in how they participate, but ultimately, music is about expression. Musicians can play around with sound on an instrument like artists play with colors on a canvas. This is a necessary piece of educating the whole child.

Having a child conduct is an important part of their exploration. When he/ she gets up in front of a class and is encouraged to lead, he/ she is empowered. At that moment, the message is "my teacher trusts me". Kids also get a chance to "try out" that role. How does it feel? Can I do this? Some students take on this role very easily, others are scared to death! The important thing is that they get a chance to be up there.

Let's take it a step further, though! Let's encourage our children to conduct what they compose. The experience becomes much more meaningful. As children play around with sound and the elements we use to enhance our works, we are creating a musically literate society. With this knowledge we will expand their minds and enrich their souls. My hope is that once children read and create music that they can keep for years to come, they will be less likely to discard music as an expendable extra. Music, like language arts, will be thought of as a necessity!